

Minutes
Pro Parks Levy Oversight Committee
March 27, 2006

Committee Members Present: Neal Adams, Alan Alabastro, Russ Brubaker, Lisa Chun, Doug Dunham, Jeff Hou, Cheryl Klinker, Joyce Moty, Alec Stephens

Staff: Ken Bounds, Erin Devoto, Susan Golub, Joelle Ligon, Carolyn Law

Committee Business: The meeting agenda was approved, as were the minutes, as corrected, from the February 27, 2006 meeting.

Public Comments: There were none.

2006 Levy Newsletter: Joelle Ligon reported on the draft 2006 Pro Parks Levy newsletter which is scheduled for completion in the next few weeks. Ms. Ligon circulated a draft newsletter, and noted that the format is the same as last year, and includes information and a large map. The map is color coded to show projects that have been completed, those that are underway, and future projects.

Cal Anderson Park receives special focus in the newsletter. The acquisition focus is on the Duwamish Head Greenbelt, and the art focus is I-5 Colonnade Park. There also are general sections on programming, development and acquisition projects completed in 2005, the Opportunity Fund, and the Oversight Committee.

The newsletter will be in production soon and will be distributed to community centers, libraries, posted on the web, and mailed to the Levy's 10,000 name mailing list.

Development Program Quarterly Update: Erin Devoto, Director of the Planning and Development Division, provided the Committee with an update on development projects.

- **Laurelhurst and Montlake Community Centers:** bids came back a little over the bid estimate, but are within the projects' contingency, so awards will be made for those projects.
- **Occidental Park:** some trees have been removed and construction has started. The appeal to the Hearing Examiner on this project will be heard in May.
- **Ballard Commons Park:** opened in January.
- **Ernst Park:** this Fremont park received additional funding through the Parks budget for an artistic fence.
- **Jefferson Park:** planning and design are underway. Parks is working with Seattle Public Utilities to lid the reservoir on the south side and abandon/fill the reservoir on the north side. The Board of Park Commissioners recommended a schematic design; there is \$7 million Pro Parks funding for the project – completion of the Master Plan would cost \$27.
- **Orchard Street Ravine:** there has been a difference of opinion on the location of the trail through the ravine, with neighbors divided over the connector capacity of the trail. Our staff assessment is that the steep slope makes construction of a

connector trail difficult and costly; however, a consultant will be hired to look into this issue;

Responding to a question from a Committee member regarding which development projects are having problems, Superintendent Bounds reiterated the comments made by Ms. Devoto regarding **Orchard Street Ravine** and noted a field lighting controversy at **Jefferson Park**. Ms. Devoto noted that there are few projects with construction issues: there have not been legal claims on any project and only 1 went through mediation. One problem the projects face is the difficulty in finding sub-contractors due to the active construction market. Responding to a question from Mr. Stephens, Ms. Devoto noted that building projects have had the most difficulty finding subcontractors, especially mechanical and electrical subs for small remodels.

Additional projects which may face a rocky start are the **Crown Hill School Open Space** project where there is a difference of opinion in the community regarding what this project should be. The question of how much space is devoted to ballfields v. open space is an issue. The **Marra Farm** Opportunity Fund project may face the issue of access to the farm area. The property, which the City purchased recently from King County, has people who have farmed it for years. Improvements to **Queen Anne Boulevard** will be contentious due to existing private encroachments. Acquisition projects that face hurdles include the **University District** where Parks is evaluating 3 properties.

In response to a question from Ms. Klinker, Superintendent Bounds provided an update on the 5 acre **Northgate Park and Ride acquisition**. Legislation has been forwarded to the City Council for this purchase – the property is currently owned by King County Metro. The City tried to include this in the initial Levy planning but the property was too expensive. The deal currently in the works has the City paying \$9 million over 3 years – none of the funding is from the Levy.

Pro Parks Levy Arts Program: Carolyn Law, the manager of the Pro Parks Levy Arts Program, briefed the Committee on art projects that have been placed in parks with Levy funds. At a previous briefing to the Committee, Ms. Law explained the development of the Levy Arts Plan. She noted that the 1% for art that is assessed for each Levy project is pooled and divided among a smaller number of parks. The goal of the program is to have artists place art in the context of the environment of the park, to make art that is unique to the park in which it will be placed, and that will work well with the other elements of the park.

Levy art projects are divided into 3 categories:

- **Small projects** for emerging artists;
- **Large projects** for regional parks; and
- **Writer in Residence** stories highlighting people's connections to parks.

The Writer in Residence stories are on the internet; also available is a folding map showing the parks talked about in the stories.

The Levy art projects are two-thirds completed. Highlights described by Ms. Law and shown by slide to the Committee include:

- **Columbia City Park** which is an in-house staff project that added solar light pavers in the paved pathway through the Park;
- **Bergen Place** in Ballard, the first Levy art project which generated considerable conversation;
- **Mineral Springs** is a simple design with stones representing day and night;
- **Lake City** is a small project that uses the art to connect the park to the plaza and library; it includes a sound element that relates to stormwater pumping through the site;
- **I-5 Colonnade** is an experimental work that creates an artificial climate zone; the project will be finished in a couple of weeks;
- **Pratt Park** is another small project that is a sculpture resembling a river system; there will be a neighborhood celebration of art in Pratt in the spring;
- **Westcrest Park** art will highlight views to the reservoir and views to the open space bowl and will include skybridges; installation is expected in the spring;
- **Jefferson Park** early design work is underway and the art may involve earthwork to symbolize the reservoirs buried under the new parkland;
- **South Lake Union** art project may take the form of a floating dock off of the NW bulkhead and will take people onto the water. The proposal captures wave action and has a sound element. A permit is needed for this installation.
- **Dexter Pit** is a unique project because the artist will be the lead on the design for the park as well as the art.

In response to a question from Mr. Stephens, Ms. Law described the diversity outreach of the public art program, noting that artists are selected from a list of public art artists, and that outreach to diversify the list is on-going. Responding to a question from Ms. Klinker regarding vandalism, Ms. Law noted that the Public Art Program is responsible for maintaining the art, including vandalism repair and graffiti removal. Citizens should call the Public Art Program to report vandalism or other problems with the art.

A question from Mr. Alabastro led Ms. Law to describe efforts underway to provide web access to information about the art projects with the goal a published piece that would allow citizens to take a Levy art tour. Superintendent Bounds noted that this could be a key piece of the final Levy report. He also commented that the approach taken, in which the 1% funding was pooled, has been a good strategy and that the program has been a big success.

Sustainable Features: Erin Devoto described Parks efforts to include sustainable features in both natural and built Levy projects. A goal was set at the beginning of the Levy to make a light impact on the landscape. LEEDs standards, an industry program for sustainable building elements, have been used for community center projects that are larger than 5,000 square feet. For non-built projects, the goal is to incorporate sustainable elements as much as possible.

Parks has had staff support for the sustainable program from Richard Gelb. Mr. Gelb is shared between Parks and the Office for Sustainability. He developed a scorecard/shopping list of sustainable features that can contribute to a project's light environmental touch. The list was developed after an evaluation of what works, what doesn't work, what does or doesn't add to project costs, and what can reduce costs.

Mr. Gelb described how sustainable features for individual projects are decided. Three goals – environmental, fiscal and social – are evaluated, and those features which overlap each of the goals the most are selected. Mr. Gelb used a power point presentation to display many of the sustainable features that have been included in Pro Parks projects.

Superintendent Bounds noted that the sustainable program that Mr. Gelb and Ms. Devoto developed was a major shift in direction for how Parks does projects. It has been very successful in a short period of time and they deserve considerable credit.

Responding to a question from Mr. Brubaker, Mr. Gelb noted that there was not a LEEDs standard for parks, but that there were efforts underway to develop these standards, based in part on the work Seattle has done. Mr. Gelb will be making 2 presentations on our sustainable program at next falls National Recreation and Parks Association conference (which will be held in Seattle).

Mr. Stephens asked Mr. Gelb how well the natural stormwater detention facilities (shown in the power point presentation) worked during the excessively heavy rains of last December and January. Mr. Gelb responded that in Greenwood Park, where there is no stormwater pipe and a bioswale handles water, the swales are designed to serve as a reservoir during heavy rains, with the water collecting in a pool, operating like a retention facility, if it can't infiltrate. The system worked as designed during the heavy rains.

Ms. Chun asked what strategies there were for mitigating environmental use outside of parks. Mr. Gelb responded that Parks does evaluate opportunities to provide environmental solutions beyond our property. For example, at Northgate we are accepting stormwater from outside of the Park. However, when this occurs there is an issue regarding contaminants entering the Park system from non-Park property.

Mr. Brubaker questioned whether Parks was working with City housing developments to include sustainable features. Superintendent Bounds responded that some housing projects have included creative environmental elements, especially related to stormwater.

Mr. Adams asked about cooperation between City departments. Superintendent Bounds answered that our considerable work with Seattle Public Utilities is discussed and reviewed by a Joint Executive Team that meets monthly. On a project by project basis, there is a lot of interdepartmental collaboration. Bigger issues are discussed at monthly Capital Cabinet meetings.

Environmental Stewardship: Leila Wilke, Parks Environmental Stewardship manager, described the Levy funded Environmental Stewardship Unit which includes 4 staff – a manager and 3 program coordinators.

Parks has identified utility conservation as a big issue for the Department and for the Environmental Stewardship Unit: there are environmental impacts with utility consumption plus a big budget impact. Ms. Wilke reviewed data from the past several years that showed how Parks utility costs significantly increased, both from steeply rising utility rates and from the increase in park land and facilities that we serve.

Considerable effort has been made by facilities, our shops and maintenance crews to reduce utility consumption. Some examples are the low energy lights that have replaced high energy ones and low-flow shower heads and faucets which have been installed. Parks utility consumption has been decreasing, but not at a level to keep pace with rate increases.

To address utility issues comprehensively, a Utility Summit was held in January 2006 and a commitment was made by Parks to work towards a Department-wide, holistic approach to utility conservation. One of the recommendations of the Summit was to hire a Resource Conservation Manager to lead and coordinate the conservation effort. Parks will be using Levy Environmental Stewardship program coordinator funds to pay for this position.

The meeting was adjourned at 9:00.